

birds through a telescope we took a count; and by our estimate there were about 200 of this rare teal present. As far as we are aware, this is the largest collection of *M. angustirostris* recorded within our limits. The sky was overcast with intermittent sunshine, but the visibility was good. We wonder whether our sighting was an indication of the successful reintroduction of this species, e.g. at Lal

Suhanra Reserve (Pakistan). So far it has been recorded in this part of the country as a rare straggler, including one bird obtained in Kutch in 1940 (BIRDS OF KUTCH, Ali, S. 1945, p. 169).

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April 4, 1990

#### 4. BALLOONS AS A DEVICE FOR SCARING BIRDS

I closely observed the roosting of a flock of 32 pariah kites *Milvus migrans govinda* from 1987 to 1989. The birds used to occupy high branches of *Eucalyptus* trees just in front of my (Aligarh) residence. They were regular in their roosting hours and slept undisturbed except on windy and rainy days.

One evening, when my daughter was playing with an gas filled balloon of dark grey colour, the balloon flew up and got entangled in the central branch of a tree in the *Eucalyptus* grove where the kites used to roost. It was becoming dark and kites started arriving within 10 minutes. As soon as some of them saw the hanging balloon they became

alarmed and left the roosting branches and circled the tree with typical calls. At times even they mobbed the balloon but when nothing happened, after 15 minutes all the kites moved away and did not roost there for the night. The balloon remained hanging for three days and some birds did return on the second day, but after seeing the balloon still hanging, moved away. The kites then deserted the site finally and did not return for the next three months, when the *Eucalyptus* trees were cut down.

It appears that at times balloons could be effectively used to scare away birds .

May 31, 1990

H.S.A. YAHYA

#### 5. UNUSUAL NESTING SITE OF BRAHMINY KITE *HALIASTUR INDUS*

The brahminy kite *Haliaeetus indus* is the most common raptor in the coastal fishing village of Kodikkarai at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu. Large numbers congregate here during the fishing season and along with gulls they are the major scavengers. Several of these birds stay back even after the fishing season gets over in March and their nesting activity starts around mid-January. Usually they nest about 6-15 m up in large banyan, peepul, tamarind, neem, casuarina or other trees (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983). At Point Calimere, palmyra *Borassus flabellifer*, coconut *Cocos nucifera* and bhendi *Thespesia populnea* are the more common nesting trees.

On 14 February 1990 a brahminy kite was flushed beside a low earth bund passing through the

mudflats of the Great Vedaranyam Swamp. A complete nest with two eggs was seen at that spot under a two metre tall *Prosopis chilensis* bush growing on the slope of the bund. The nest was constructed the usual way but it was right on the ground, about 12 m away from the water's edge. Twigs of *Prosopis chilensis*, *Arthrocnemum indicum*, *Suaeda* sp., mud and cowdung were used to line the nest. The bund passes between the natural mudflats and the reservoir used for storing sea water for salt extraction. One of the birds was again seen incubating the eggs the next day, while another sat a little away on the mudflat. Unfortunately the nest was preyed upon after a couple of days, probably by a mongoose or a jackal, and the kites abandoned the site.